

This Week in Deterrence *(September 15-19, 2025)*

Bottom line: The center of gravity in deterrence is shifting to space-enabled, long-range, rapidly replaceable kill webs, and our adversaries are acting as if they know it. NATO voices now openly frame space as a war-fighting domain, while Europe moves from point defense to deep strike, Washington debates force-design trades (B-52J vs. more B-21s), and Iran/Russia press for coercive advantage amid sanctions friction. The strategic task is to turn language and spending into tested, resilient, allied operational architectures, and fast.

Unifying Trends

1. Space goes operational, not “supporting.”
NATO leaders’ tone shift (Germany, France, Spain, Canada) treats space as a domain for defense and offense (“shield and sword”), demanding common doctrine, delegated authorities, and tactically responsive launch (<96 hours) to restore/augment constellations under attack.
2. From point defense to deep strike.
Denmark’s decision to field long-range precision fires (Tomahawk/JASSM-ER class and European options) reflects a continental realization: you can’t intercept your way out of massed salvos—you must hold launchers, C2, and magazines at risk.
3. U.S. force-design inflection.
Cost/schedule breaches on B-52J upgrades collide with contested-airspace realities, strengthening arguments to expand and accelerate B-21. This is a survivability vs. standoff trade with industrial-base and budget consequences.
4. Great-Power coercion is coordinated.
ISW’s readout on Moscow’s aims, Iran’s missile signaling and suspected tests, and Beijing’s pressure campaigns (incl. Taiwan wargaming counters) form a convergent pressure track seeking to outlast Western cohesion and exploit cost-asymmetry (cheap counter-space/EW vs. exquisite satellites).
5. Homeland defense as a system-of-systems problem.
“Golden Dome” can work only if rigorous end-to-end (E2E) testing—across space sensors, comms, C2, effectors, cyber—starts now and leverages commercial testbeds/digital twins. Otherwise, the architecture risks beautiful fragility.
6. Forward posture debates return.
Talk of re-entering Bagram underscores a broader theme: geography for deterrence matters again, but must be weighed against access, legitimacy, and escalation dynamics with the Taliban and China.

What This Means Operationally

- Speed is deterrence. Time to detect-decide-deliver (and to replace space capacity) is now a primary measure of merit.
- Proliferation beats pedigree. Multi-orbit, proliferated constellations with rapid reconstitution are more survivable than few exquisite assets.
- Kill webs over platforms. Advantage will come from tested integration of sensors, AI-enabled C2, and multi-domain effectors, not any single “silver bullet.”
- Allies are moving—synchronize them. Europe’s deep-strike pivot and NATO’s space posture create a window to standardize doctrine, data, and munitions.

Risks to Watch

- Doctrine lag in space. Without common allied space ROE/authorities, response times will miss the fight.
- Testing shortfalls. If E2E campaigns are under-funded or staged too late, integration debt will surface in crisis.
- Budget whiplash. Raiding legacy accounts for survivable capacity is necessary—but undisciplined shifts can hollow critical standoff magazines and training.
- Cost asymmetry. Adversaries’ cheap EW/dazzling/cyber vs. our pricey satellites remains a structural vulnerability.

Priority Actions (next 6–12 months)

1. Adopt an Allied Space Operations Doctrine 1.0
Codify protect/defend, attribution thresholds, delegated authorities, and tactically responsive launch across NATO.
2. Stand up a Joint Tactically Responsive Space (TacRS) pipeline
Contract now for rideshare, hot-spare payloads, and 96-hour launch/checkout drills; exercise quarterly.
3. Golden Dome: lock an Integrated Master Test Plan
Fund E2E test events that include on-orbit sensing + ground C2 + live/interoperable interceptors + cyber red-teaming. Mandate industry-in-the-loop from day one.
4. Rebalance the bomber portfolio toward survivability
Protect B-21 ramp; scrutinize B-52J scope/schedule to preserve standoff munitions buys and mission-planning AI.

5. European deep-strike integration
Fast-track common mission planning, targeting data standards, and logistics for JASSM-ER/Tomahawk/European LR strike across F-35 and surface fleets.
6. Harden the space kill web
Deploy optical crosslinks, jam-resilient waveforms, PNT alternatives, and autonomous battle management aids to ride through EW/cyber.
7. Tighten economic levers against Russia/Iran
Enforce oil price caps/leakage, expand sanctions on dual-use microelectronics, and close maritime re-flag loopholes that fund attritional strategies.
8. Wargame access/logistics for any Afghanistan posture
If Bagram re-entry is pursued, pre-plan overflight, basing, sustainment, and escalation controls; build non-permissive extraction branches.

Concrete Measures of Effectiveness

- Time-to-Replace-On-Orbit (TTRO): target ≤ 96 hours from loss to restored coverage.
- Find-Fix-Finish latency: median time from first detection to effect in minutes, not hours.
- E2E test cadence: quarterly cross-domain integrated events; zero critical interoperability defects carried forward.
- Allied deep-strike coverage: % of NATO targets held at risk at >500 km with validated comms/targeting.
- Resilience index: % of space services with disaggregated backups (multi-orbit/multi-vendor).

Longer Perspective

Deterrence now hinges on resilient connections more than singular platforms: space that can fight and recover, kill webs that integrate fast, and alliances that can reach deep. If we test as we will fight, standardize with allies, and bias for speed and survivability, we deny adversaries the slow-motion coercion they seek—and keep escalation ladders short, clear, and in our control.

Resources

Space is the new frontier of war – Defense News (Rudy Ruitenberg, Sep 17, 2025): <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2025/09/17/space-is-the-new-frontier-of-war-officials-say-in-change-of-tone/>

For Golden Dome to work, it needs to be put to the test – Breaking Defense (Sarah Mineiro, Sep 18, 2025): <https://breakingdefense.com/2025/09/for-golden-dome-to-work-it-needs-to-be-put-to-the-test/>

President says US working to take back Bagram Air Base – Military Times (Aamer Madhani & Konstantin Toropin, Sep 18, 2025): <https://www.militarytimes.com/2025/09/18/trump-says-us-working-to-take-back-bagram-air-base-from-taliban/>

The Air Force's New B-52J Bomber Has a New Enemy – National Security Journal (Reuben Johnson, Sep 19, 2025): <https://nationalsecurityjournal.com/2025/09/19/the-air-forces-new-b-52j-bomber-has-a-new-enemy-not-russia-or-china/>

Denmark to field long-range strike weapons – Defense News (Rudy Ruitenberg, Sep 18, 2025): <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2025/09/18/denmark-to-field-long-range-strike-weapons-in-bid-to-deter-attacks/>

Moscow's war aims unchanged – New Voice of Ukraine (Alex Stezhensky, Sep 19, 2025): <https://english.nv.ua/nation/moscow-s-war-aims-unchanged-kremlin-pushes-trump-to-restore-ties-with-russia-without-peace-in-ukraine-isw-50371434.html>

Iran reacts to Rubio's nuclear missiles comments – Newsweek (Amira El-Fekki, Sep 18, 2025): <https://www.newsweek.com/iran-reacts-rubios-nuclear-missiles-comments-2025-1833443>

Iran conducts suspected missile test – Newsweek (Amir Daftari, Sep 19, 2025): <https://www.newsweek.com/iran-conducts-suspected-missile-test-2025-1833542>

Mainland Chinese magazine details plans to counter Taiwan's weapons – South China Morning Post (Alcott Wei, Sep 17, 2025): <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3240283/mainland-chinese-military-magazine-details-plans-counter-taiwans-most-advanced-weapons>

Americans can stand together in standing up to China – Washington Times (Daniel N. Hoffman, Sep 19, 2025): <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/sep/19/americans-can-stand-together-in-standing-up-to-chi/>

Full Details

1. Space is the new frontier of war, officials say in change of tone

[Space is the new frontier of war, officials say in change of tone](#)

By: [Rudy Ruitenberg](#) for Defense News // Sep 17, 2025, 05:51 AM

PARIS — Space has become a war-fighting domain, an assessment that calls for doctrinal changes and the ability to intervene there more quickly, space-force leaders from several NATO countries said at the Space Defense and Security Summit here on Tuesday.

“The rule-based international order in space is nearly over,” said Brig. Gen. Jürgen Schrödl, a division head with responsibility for space at the German Ministry of Defence’s strategy and operations department. “We have to accept that space is a tested domain, is a war-fighting domain, is becoming a war-fighting domain.” The language is a step up from more diplomatic assessments at the summit last year, when military space leaders discussed growing threats to in-orbit assets, without going as far as describing space as a potential war zone or battlefield.

Global governments in the past two years spent more of their space budgets on defense than on civil space, according to data from summit organizer Novaspace. Of the \$73.1 billion in global government spending on space defense and security in 2024, more than a third was classified, the consultancy says. “What you see is that it is now the military domain that is leading,” Hermann Ludwig Moeller, director of the European Space Policy Institute, told Defense News at the conference. “This is really clear compared to last year, the language and what is behind the language has shifted.”

More than 200 anti-satellite weapons now circle Earth in different orbits, said Brig. Gen. Christopher Horner, commander of 3 Canadian Space Division. While he didn’t provide details on their nature, he said that is a “shocking number of capabilities” to threaten allied space capabilities including satellite comms to Earth observation. While hostile action in space is not new, “things are accelerating very fast,” said Maj. Gen. Vincent Chusseau, commander of French Space Command since August. “Space is a really full operational domain, we talk about war fighting in space.”

Chusseau said Russia has a full range of capabilities from satellites for rendezvous and proximity operations and orbiters that pack smaller satellites like a Russian doll, to anti-satellite missiles, electronic warfare, laser dazzling and cyber attacks. Meanwhile, China

is accelerating its space activities to achieve superiority there, according to Maj. Gen. Isaac Manuel Crespo Zaragoza, space commander for the Spanish Air and Space Force. China was the second-biggest spender on space defense and security in 2024 with \$9.3 billion, according to Novaspaces data, compared with \$53.1 billion spent by the United States.

Russia spent \$2.3 billion and France \$2.1 billion, with Germany trailing in eighth position with space defense and security spend of \$655 million. The big change is Germany "finally realized" that space is a war-fighting domain, said Maj. Gen. Michael Traut, commander of the German Space Command. "Space becomes more and more tactical because technology is there, kill chains need to be faster," the German commander said. "And if we talk about kill chains, we talk about seconds and minutes, not about creating an informational background for strategic decisions any more."

Traut provided the example of integrated missile defense, which wouldn't be as effective without pre-warning and cueing of systems from space. The German military will design a military space-defense architecture by the end of this year that will be an enabler for multi-domain operations, said the German space commander. The first step will be a "multifunctional, multi-orbit constellation" to be completed in 2029, as well as the associated ground-based infrastructure. There will be a need for a common space doctrine, for example how to protect allied assets or counter adversarial offensive action, according to Traut. That's an operational implication that's arisen in the past one to two years, he said.

"This is still an open issue for us, to develop a common space doctrine," Traut said. "How do we operate? Who's going to decide, in what case, and how do we manage our space battles." Horner said that while the narrative is changing in Canada, "we are not quite at a place where I can say publicly that space is a war-fighting domain," joking that his policy officer in the audience was cringing "as I dance around that language." Nevertheless, changing language allows to open up the discussion of future defense strategies, including the need to take offensive and defensive action in space to protect critical infrastructure, Horner said. "None of those were conversations that were truly happening a year ago."

"Beyond the big strategic programs and projects that are underway, how do we maintain a war-fighting edge or decisional advantage when the fight begins?" Horner asked. "And how do we replace capabilities quickly?" Rather than "giant school bus-sized things" in geostationary orbit, the answers might be "tactically responsive capabilities that allow us to maintain a war fighting advantage,"

Horner said. "How do we respond with some immediacy so that we can launch a tactical capability in 96 hours?"

Germany's Schrödl said responsive launch and being able to "very quickly" bring new satellites into space when they are degraded also has a deterrence role. He said that at a tactical level, Germany is seeing "a lot of incidents" happening with its satellites, and is observing intentional disturbance by Russia both from the ground and from space, including a lot of temporarily dazzling of observation and reconnaissance satellites. NATO forces face an asymmetry in the cost of their space assets, with some offensive capabilities being "much cheaper," said Lt. Gen. Bertrand Le Meur, head of the directorate for defense strategy, counter proliferation and strategic foresight at the French Armed Forces Ministry.

"My guess is that in the coming years we will see many nations being able to develop those capabilities because space is becoming available," Le Meur said. "Our space assets are kind of a honeypot, something very expensive, very exquisite," Le Meur said. "So the figures globally are against us." In addition to functional space capabilities that have been used by armed forces for decades, such as Earth observation and communications, there is now a need for operational capabilities "in and for space," to protect those functional capabilities, according to Germany's Traut.

"And those operational capabilities consist of defensive and offensive means," Traut said. "I can repeat that officially. Defensive and offensive means, shield and sword." About [Rudy Ruitenberg](#) Rudy Ruitenberg is a Europe correspondent for Defense News. He started his career at Bloomberg News and has experience reporting on technology, commodity markets and politics.

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2. For [Golden Dome](#) to work, it needs to be put to the test

https://breakingdefense.com/2025/09/for-golden-dome-to-work-it-needs-to-be-put-to-the-test/?utm_campaign=dfn-ebb&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sailthru

Rigorous end-to-end systems testing is imperative and needs to happen soon for Golden Dome for America to be a success, according to this op-ed from Sarah Mineiro.

By: [Sarah Mineiro](#) for Breaking Defense // on September 18, 2025 11:17 am

Two hundred and eighty-six days into its mission, the Mars Surveyor '98 began its orbital insertion maneuver — and 20 minutes later the spacecraft was permanently lost.

When the Mishap Investigation Board released its Phase I report on Nov. 10, 1999, it determined the cause of failure was that one piece of ground software calculated the trajectory in imperial units and another produced results in metric units. Ultimately the \$327 million loss of the instrument was blamed on lack of sufficient rigorous end-to-end (E2E) systems testing, including across both hardware and software elements. President Donald Trump's initiative to protect the homeland from missile attacks, the Golden Dome for America, is now underway. Initial funding was secured in the reconciliation bill, and industry will soon be unleashed to contribute to the project.

The technical challenges associated with implementing Golden Dome, however, will be significant. The effort will require integrating disparate systems across vast distances and different domains — from space-based sensors to ground-based interceptors. Among many other challenges, rigorous and calibrated E2E testing is an essential but underappreciated component to ensure the Golden Dome functions at the highest possible level, and on time. E2E testing is going to be essential to putting in place a system that can deny our adversaries of coercive first strikes and fully leverage our strategic deterrent — without ending up with the kind of basic math failures that doomed the Mars Surveyor project.

E2E testing involves leveraging novel testing methods for both hardware and software and simulating diverse, realistic scenarios, such as detecting and tracking various missile threats in space with real targets, including ballistic and hypersonic missile surrogates; coordinating diverse space and terrestrial interceptor employment; evaluating shot doctrine; and assessing system performance. The system's susceptibility to cyberattacks and the need for robust interoperability and communication among diverse components add further layers of complexity.

Testing commercially developed defense products and services are often perceived as speedbumps on the road to deployment, but they are truly essential parts of systems-of-systems engineering, ensuring that the capabilities delivered to our military can be used in the way intended on a battlefield or when asked to defend the homeland. As an initiative, [Golden Dome for America](#) remains both ambitious and ambiguous. For an initial deployment target of 2028, rigorous testing must be engineered into the system-of-systems architecture from the very beginning. Testing must be conducted across each platform, traversing multiple domains, and must include both hardware and software.

The [Senate](#) and [House](#) have noted the importance of a "robust testing regime" to include "execution of end-to-end detection, tracking and destruction techniques that

exercise multiple components of the Golden Dome System.” The dynamic US industrial base may provide part of the answer in three ways.

Exploit Existing Commercial Capabilities

Over the past few years, commercial companies have developed multiple and novel [testbeds](#) for ballistic and [hypersonic reentry programs](#). The testing [ecosystem](#) now includes representation from large primes to innovative Silicon Beach start-ups that are increasing the capacity and capability of hypersonic and reentry testing. Better leveraging this ecosystem, perhaps with some slight modifications, could significantly reduce the costs associated with traditional flight-testing methods, enabling more frequent and iterative testing.

One such opportunity would be to have on-orbit Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA) Transport Layer satellites observe the [frequent commercial hypersonic reentries](#) happening now, and more frequently with the government’s Multi-Service Advanced Capability Hypersonics Test Bed ([MACH-TB](#)) program. Incentivize Investment In Test Facilities There is [notable growth in the ability](#) to digitally twin, model, orchestrate, and optimize space-based sensing assets autonomously. In the case of space, the nation is seeing novel launch providers and commercial hypersonic reentry providers that could be leveraged for testing.

As the lead engineering and test arm for Golden Dome, the Missile Defense Agency can bring together new facilities and significant test capabilities. The Pentagon could, through earlier and broader investment, incentivize companies to build more hypersonic and space testing facilities and make them available for broad use in support of Golden Dome testing requirements early in the systems engineering process. Include Commercial Companies into the Integrated Test Campaign Every component across the Golden Dome kill web will need to be tested in some capacity.

An integrated master test plan must account for sensor level tests that ensure space sensor passive angle tracking and [optical communications terminals](#) are capable of sensing an incoming weapon and passing that track data to a weapon system. It must also allow for on-orbit testing, associated command and control testing, and ultimately for testing in operationally relevant scenarios to validate the E2E kill web. One way to do meet those objectives is to involve Golden Dome industry partners in the development of the integrated master test plan from the very beginning. This could help to identify faults earlier, facilitate remediation of those faults early and often, and accelerate more rapid testing events.

While aberrant from how test campaigns are [currently developed in the DoD](#), it would arguably align with the need for deployment speed articulated from the [president in authorizing Golden Dome for America](#). Testing has long [earned the ire of the services](#), and perhaps rightly so. Nonetheless it is a necessary part of systems development — and on a system as complex as Golden Dome for America, we should be leveraging industry’s aligned investments to ensure both speed and specifications are met.

The [Trump White House](#), [Department of Defense](#), and [Congress](#) have all rightly driven innovation and commercialization of defense technology while rebuilding the antiquated and increasingly irrelevant defense acquisition system. Nevertheless, production speed alone will not be a sufficient metric to ensure the successful operational deployment of a complex multi-domain, multi-service, and multi-effector layered missile defense system. To deploy Golden Dome on schedule, it must be rigorously tested. Sarah Mineiro was the staff director of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee on the House Armed Services Committee for the House Republicans and is now a non-resident Senior Associate with CSIS Aerospace Security Project.

3. [President says US working to take back Bagram Air Base from Taliban](#)

[Trump says US working to take back Bagram Air Base from Taliban](#)

By: Aamer Madhani, and Konstantin Toropin, The Associated Press for the Military Times // Sep 18, 2025, 03:33 PM

President Donald Trump on Thursday suggested that he is working to reestablish a U.S. presence at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, four years after [America’s chaotic withdrawal](#) from the country left the base in the Taliban’s hands.

Trump floated the idea during a press conference with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer as he wrapped up [a state visit to the U.K.](#) and tied it to the need for the U.S. to counter [its top rival](#), China. “We’re trying to get it back,” Trump said of the base in an aside to a question about ending [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine](#). While Trump described his call for the U.S. military to reestablish a position in Afghanistan as “breaking news,” the Republican president has previously raised the idea. The White House did not immediately respond to questions about whether it or the Pentagon has done any planning around returning to the sprawling air base, which was central to [America’s longest war](#).

During his first presidency, Trump [set the terms for the U.S. withdrawal](#) by negotiating a deal with the Taliban. The 20-year conflict [came to an end in disquieting fashion](#) under

President Joe Biden: The U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed, a grisly bombing [killed 13 U.S. troops and 170 others](#), and thousands of desperate Afghans descended on Kabul's airport in search of a way out before the final U.S. aircraft departed over the Hindu Kush. The Afghanistan debacle was a major setback just eight months into Biden's Democratic presidency that he [struggled to recover from](#).

Biden's Republican detractors, including Trump, [seized on it as a signal moment](#) in a failed presidency. Those [criticisms have persisted](#) into the present day, including as recently as last week, when Trump claimed the move emboldened Russian President Vladimir Putin to [invade Ukraine](#) in February 2022. "He would have never done what he did, except that he didn't respect the leadership of the United States," Trump said, speaking of Putin. "They just went through the Afghanistan total disaster for no reason whatsoever. We were going to leave Afghanistan, but we were going to leave it with strength and dignity. We were going to keep Bagram Air Base — one of the biggest air bases in the world. We gave it to them for nothing."

It is unclear if the U.S. has any new direct or indirect conversations with the Taliban government about returning to the country. But Trump hinted that the Taliban, who have [struggled with an economic crisis](#), international legitimacy, internal rifts and rival militant groups since [their return to power](#) in 2021, could be game to allow the U.S. military to return. "We're trying to get it back because they need things from us," Trump said of the Taliban. The president repeated his view that a U.S. presence at Bagram is of value because of its proximity to China, the most significant [economic and military competitor](#) to the United States.

"But one of the reasons we want that base is, as you know, it's an hour away from where China makes its nuclear weapons," Trump said. "So a lot of things are happening." While the U.S. and the Taliban have no formal diplomatic ties, the sides have had [hostage conversations](#). An American man who was abducted more than two years ago while traveling through Afghanistan as a tourist was [released by the Taliban](#) in March. Last week, the Taliban also said they [reached an agreement with U.S. envoys](#) on an exchange of prisoners as part of an effort to normalize relations between the United States and Afghanistan.

The Taliban gave no details of a detainee swap, and the White House did not comment on the meeting in Kabul or the results described in a Taliban statement. The Taliban released photographs from their talks, showing their foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, with Trump's special envoy for hostage response, [Adam Boehler](#). Officials at U.S. Central Command in the Middle East and the Pentagon, including Defense

Secretary Pete Hegseth's office, referred questions about reestablishing a presence at Bagram to the White House.

4. The Air Force's New B-52J Bomber Has a New Enemy (Not Russia or China)

[The Air Force's New B-52J Bomber Has a New Enemy \(Not Russia or China\)](#)

By: Reuben Johnson for the National Security Journal // 8h

Key Points and Summary

-With B-52J upgrades stumbling, the Air Force is eyeing a larger B-21 Raider fleet.

-Former USAF chief Gen. David Allvin told senators he'd "take all I can get," as engine and radar modernizations for 76 BUFFs breach cost baselines and slip schedules, including a significant Nunn-McCurdy on the radar.

-The non-stealth B-52J is optimized for standoff weapons, but survivability gaps in contested airspace fuel calls to lift the B-21 buy from the 100-jet minimum toward ~145 and to accelerate production—potentially by shifting B-52J funds—amid rising pressure from Russia, China, and Middle East crises.

-The B-52J Bomber: Is It Being Replaced by More B-21 Raider Bombers?

WARSAW, POLAND - Recently, it became known that the US Air Force (USAF) may have to increase the number of [B-21 Raider](#) bombers to be procured beyond the initially planned 100 [units](#). Several factors are driving that requirement: increased tensions with Russia over the war in Ukraine, a constantly more expansionist People's Republic of China (PRC), and the unrest in the Middle East, to name a few. But one of the other, non-geopolitical factors is that the upcoming [B-52J](#) upgrade is proving to be more complicated than planned and is stretching the timeline to the [right](#).

This was the testimony of then-USAF Chief of Staff Gen. David W. Allvin when he appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) on May 20. If the B-52 modernization program "goes worse than we hope, then we would need more" money for B-21s, Allvin told Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.). When the Republican Senator was then asked if the USAF planned number of B-21s to be allocated was "anywhere close" to the

service's requirement, Allvin answered that he would "take all I can get with the funding."

Allvin did not ultimately ask for more B-21s - though he did not specify how many total aircraft would be enough to meet the service's [requirement](#). Three months later, he was forced out of the Chief of Staff's job in another one of the Trump Administration Pentagon's realignments. He will retire in November. Reportedly, his removal was a desire by the Pete Hegseth Pentagon to move away from plans for a service-wide [reorganization](#) that former Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall had advocated. The initiative "Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition" was seen as "more distracting than helpful" as the USAF is busy coping with [some of the lowest readiness rates ever](#) and [personnel problems](#).

Parallel Upgrade on B-52J Bomber

The B-52J upgrade program consists of two parallel efforts: the Commercial Engine Replacement program (CERP) and the Radar Modernization Program (RMP), both of which are in process. These two major re-fits will, first of all, replace the engines and pylons of all 76 airplanes in the B-52H [fleet](#). The second part of the program is a replacement of the radar, upgrades of the communications suites, and several other improvements. But the effort has hit more than one snag in the process. The radar upgrade has triggered a [Nunn-McCurdy Act breach](#) on the grounds that it has overrun the projected cost of that part of the [program](#).

The breach is categorized as "significant," a designation given only when there is a 15 percent or more deviation from the base cost or schedule. But the increasing questions about problems with the B-52J upgrade caused Allvin to vacillate, and to appear to test the possibility of going above the buy of 100 of the [B-21](#). The B-21, he said at the time, is an "incredible capability" that has gone "pretty well" in its flight test. "The 100 minimum is certainly something we can stand behind," he said. "When we look at what the maximum is, I really want to look at the risk over time, and opportunities over time."

Requirements and Survivability

When he had spoken to the SASC, Alvin had not indicated he would request [more](#) than 100 B-21s. He had even said that by the time they were all delivered, advancements in technology might generate a new program – a completely new design, next-gen bomber platform. If that remains the direction of travel even now, after Allvin has announced his retirement, the money being spent on the B-52J could eventually be viewed as resources being wasted and better spent elsewhere. B-52J's [major shortcoming](#) is that it is a non-stealthy platform.

Having such a large radar cross section (RCS) renders the aircraft unusable for missions that require a bomber to penetrate a contemporary [air defense network](#). It is true that the aircraft, once modernized, will be optimized for standoff attacks with long-range weapons. But its lack of survivability in contested environments may be cause for the program to be truncated. Its inability to fly supersonic is another – and then there's its limited 50,000 operational ceiling. As of today, there are numerous discussions among the USAF brass about the optimal number of B-21s, now being 145.

Some of the same senior-level officers are also suggesting that the rate of production should be accelerated in order to receive more of the B-21s sooner. If these proposed expansions to the B-21 program are implemented, the increase in outlays for that program could be substantial. The B-52J program budget will likely be “robbed” to pay for the extra, unplanned flying wing [bombers](#). ---- About the Author: Reuben F. Johnson -- [Reuben F. Johnson](#) has thirty-six years of experience analyzing and reporting on foreign weapons systems, defense technologies, and international arms export policy.

5. Denmark to field long-range strike weapons in bid to deter attacks

[Denmark to field long-range strike weapons in bid to deter attacks](#)

By: [Rudy Ruitenberg](#) for Defense News // Sep 18, 2025, 09:23 AM

PARIS — The Danish government has decided the country needs long-range strike weapons to strengthen its deterrence posture as well as the collective deterrence of NATO, based on a recommendation from Chief of Defence Gen. Michael Hyldgaard.

The Danish armed forces will now decide how to buy and integrate long-range precision weapons in the force, Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said in a [statement](#) on Wednesday. The decision in principle follows an announcement earlier this month to invest around 58 billion kroner (US\$9.2 billion) in eight medium- and long-range [air defense systems](#). The Danish plan to add long-range strike comes as European military leaders increasingly recognize that point defense won't suffice to protect cities against massed swarms of missiles and drones, a tactic Russia uses in Ukraine to overwhelm air defenses. In that logic, neutralizing enemy launch capabilities at range will be essential.

“Together with the ground-based air defense, Denmark is strengthening its ability not only to counter threats from the air, but also to more actively combat threats far from

Denmark," Lund Poulsen said. The Ukrainian experience shows the importance of layered air defense that can both defend against threats in the air, as well as preventively defeat such threats on enemy territory before launch, the Defence Ministry said. That includes the ability to defeat targets such as enemy missile launchers. Buying long-range precision weapons is a request by NATO, and Denmark is buying them to deter and avoid a situation where they're needed, according to Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

The Danish capability will contribute to Europe's ambition to be able to defend itself by 2030 at the latest, he said. The Danish Ministry of Defence Acquisition and Logistics Organisation will now research the market to determine which weapons best suit the Danish needs, the government said. Possible long-range strike candidates might include the Tomahawk cruise missile, which could equip the Danish Iver Huitfeldt-class frigates. Another option is long-range munitions compatible with the country's F-35 fighter jets such as the JASSM-ER stand-off missile.

Pan-European missile maker MBDA has been marketing a land-launched version of its naval cruise missile, and at the DSEI UK defense show last week unveiled a low-cost effector with an 800-kilometer plus range called Crossbow, with an aim to be ready for production at scale in the second quarter of 2026. France, Germany, Italy and Poland are cooperating on the European Long-Range Strike Approach, though the timeline for that project remains unclear. A German-British agreement [signed in July](#) to develop "deep precision strike" weapon with a range of more than 2,000 kilometers as part of ELSA is expected to result in a capability "within a decade."

About [Rudy Ruitenberg](#) --- Rudy Ruitenberg is a Europe correspondent for Defense News. He started his career at Bloomberg News and has experience reporting on technology, commodity markets and politics.

6. Moscow's war aims unchanged. Kremlin pushes Trump to restore ties with Russia without peace in Ukraine — ISW

[Moscow's war aims unchanged. Kremlin pushes Trump to restore ties with Russia without peace in Ukraine — ISW](#)

By: Alex Stezhensky for The New Voice of Ukraine // 3h

ISW analysts pointed to comments by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who on Sept. 18 asserted that U.S. President Donald Trump supposedly seeks to "remove the issue of Ukraine" from the agenda of U.S.-Russia contacts in order to "normalize" bilateral economic, technological and other ties.

Earlier, Lavrov said attempts to “push” Vladimir Putin into economic deals with the United States would not end the war. According to ISW, those remarks suggest the Kremlin is nudging Trump to separate Russia’s war in Ukraine from discussions of bilateral U.S.-Russia relations, particularly in the economic sphere. The likely goal is to continue the war while easing the burden of existing and future sanctions on Russia’s economy — especially sanctions targeting revenues from energy exports, which fund much of Moscow’s war effort.

In a similar way, the Kremlin deployed Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, to promote expanded economic and business ties with the United States and to secure concessions from Trump’s administration on Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russia’s military leadership continues to signal adherence to Putin’s “theory of victory” — the belief that Russia can win a war of attrition against Ukraine, ISW said. On Sept. 18, Putin declared that more than 700,000 Russian troops are deployed on the front line in Ukraine. On Sept. 17, Gen. Valerii Gerasimov, chief of the Russian General Staff, claimed Russian forces are advancing “on almost all fronts.”

ISW stressed that Gerasimov’s and Putin’s statements reflect the “theory of victory,” which assumes Russia has sufficient resources and combat power to keep advancing incrementally over an indefinite period and ultimately prevail in a war of attrition. Under this view, Moscow believes it can “outlast” Western support for Ukraine and the ability of Ukrainian defense forces to resist Russian aggression. ISW reminded that Putin has repeatedly voiced confidence his forces can achieve his military objectives on the battlefield, even if progress comes only in small steps.

The think tank argued that the latest statements from Putin and Gerasimov are part of broader Kremlin efforts to push Ukraine and the West to immediately yield to Putin’s maximalist demands out of fear that Russia’s victory is inevitable and its aggression will only intensify in the future. At the same time, the Kremlin continues to stand by its original war aims in Ukraine. On Sept. 18, Lavrov repeated that Russia is willing to compromise only if a settlement guarantees Russia’s “legitimate security interests” and the “interests of Russians living in Ukraine.” He also claimed the United States supposedly “understands” the need to resolve what Moscow calls the “root causes” of the war.

By that, Kremlin officials, including Lavrov, mean Russia’s original demands in the conflict. Moscow still insists it will achieve those objectives either militarily or diplomatically. “Lavrov is trying to falsely portray Russia as willing to compromise, despite the Kremlin’s repeated demands that Ukraine capitulate and accept Russia’s

maximalist conditions,” the ISW report said. Still, ISW continues to assess that a Russian victory is not inevitable, and that Ukraine and the West can exploit several key vulnerabilities to force Putin to recalculate and enter genuine negotiations.

Russia’s battlefield gains are coming at a heavy cost: Ukraine’s top commander, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, said on Sept. 9 that Russian forces have lost nearly 300,000 troops killed and wounded since January 2025. Over the course of this year, Russian advances have been slow, while losses have been disproportionately high compared with the territory seized, ISW noted. The war is also straining Russia’s economy through rising and unstable war spending, mounting inflation and a severe labor shortage. Putin’s focus on military spending and building up the defense-industrial base has come at the expense of civilian sectors.

Russia’s ability to bankroll its war machine still hinges in part on oil exports, which provide a significant share of federal revenues. ISW pointed out that Trump himself acknowledged these vulnerabilities, saying on Sept. 18 that Russia is suffering heavier losses than Ukraine and that Putin will have to “exit” the war if oil prices fall.

7. Iran reacts to Rubio's nuclear missiles comments

[Iran reacts to Rubio's nuclear missiles comments](#)

By: Amira El-Fekki for Newsweek // 21h

The Foreign Ministry in Tehran on Wednesday dismissed criticism of its missiles program from U.S. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#), who at a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) earlier this week said a “nuclear Iran” posed a serious security risk.

Esmail Baqaei, Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson, called the remarks “nonsense.” Newsweek has reached out to the U.S. State Department and the Iranian Foreign Ministry for additional comments. The comments from both sides [highlight rising tensions](#) nearly three months after the U.S. bombed Iran’s nuclear facilities, following Israeli attacks that turned into a military conflict, in which Iran demonstrated its missile power—a major concern for the U.S. and its allies, in addition to Tehran’s proxy groups in the region.

Iran claims it does not seek nuclear weapons and has hardened its stance in talks with the U.S., European countries and the U.N.’s atomic watchdog. It has defended its nuclear and [missile programs](#) and vowed a “crushing response” to any new attacks by its enemies. Baqaei said Washington had no right to comment on its missiles program,

which Rubio described as an “unacceptable risk.” “Iran’s defensive capabilities are non-negotiable and not subject to U.S. approval,” he told a regular press conference. Iran launched barrages of missiles against Israel and the [U.S. military](#) base in Qatar in retaliation for the attacks in June.

[In a new warning](#), a senior Iranian army official said Tehran was ready to broaden its military reach beyond conventional strikes if attacked. Iran has also accused the U.S. of “hostile and criminal interference in Iran’s internal affairs,” according to the Iranian foreign ministry’s statement. Also on Wednesday, Rubio described Iran as “the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism,” in a statement designating Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq as terrorist entities. Iran’s ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),

Reza Najafi, has accused the U.S. of exerting political pressure on countries to block support for Iran’s proposed resolution to the agency—[supported by Russia and China](#)—that prohibits attacks on peaceful nuclear facilities. Iran and the IAEA [reached a new understanding](#) aimed at improving the implementation of safeguarding obligations, but Tehran has not allowed agency inspectors to resume monitoring activities, which were [suspended after the conflict](#) in June. Before the Israeli and U.S. strikes, a [dispute over uranium enrichment](#), which the IAEA says neared bomb-grade, had emerged during negotiations between the two sides. The conflict took place before a planned sixth round of nuclear talks.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said Wednesday: “The United States is in no position to make decisions about Iran’s national defence capabilities. The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to preserve its independence at any cost, stand on its own feet, and firmly resist the excessive demands, aggression, and acts of hostility by foreign powers—including the United States and the Zionist regime.” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday: “And so a nuclear Iran governed by a radical Shia cleric that possesses not just nuclear weapons potentially but the missiles that could deliver those weapons far away is an unacceptable risk not just for Israel, not just for the United States, but for the world.

That’s why...the President continues with our [campaign of maximum pressure](#).” Progress by Iran with the IAEA and the E3—France, the U.K. and Germany—could determine how the U.S. responds in the coming weeks, especially as a U.N. [snapback mechanism](#) is set to automatically reimpose sanctions if no agreement is reached.

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8. Iran conducts suspected missile test: What we know

[Iran conducts suspected missile test: What we know](#)

By: Amir Daftari for Newsweek // 49m

Iran carried out suspected missile system tests near its capital, Tehran, on Thursday evening local time, according to reports shared by outlets linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The launches have not been independently verified by [Iranian authorities](#). The activity, visible across several provinces, was captured in photographs and videos posted on social media showing luminous trails arcing across the night sky. Newsweek has reached out to the U.S. State Department and Iran's Foreign Ministry for comment. The missile tests come months after the 12-day war in June, when Israel and the [United States](#) carried out coordinated strikes on sites linked to Iran's nuclear program. Israel claimed to have destroyed portions of Iran's missile and nuclear capabilities, while U.S. forces targeted additional nuclear facilities.

Thursday's launches demonstrate [Iran's intent](#) to project strength and protect its nuclear ambitions, while highlighting regional stakes as Europe and the U.S. push for renewed sanctions over alleged violations to the 2015 nuclear agreement. Residents in Tehran and the northeastern cities of Gorgan, Sari and Semnan reported seeing glowing objects streaking across the night sky, while social media users shared clips showing trails of smoke from the launches. Sepah Pasdaran News, an official IRGC-affiliated Telegram channel, also posted images of the luminous arcs.

One widely circulated clip came from the X account [Iran Observer](#), which shared the footage with the caption: "Numerous new missiles are being prepared for a possible new round of war with Israel." Newsweek could not independently verify the videos. Iran's missile arsenal has long been a focal point of its confrontation with Israel and Western powers, with Tehran insisting the weapons are defensive. Its [nuclear program](#), meanwhile, has drawn intensified scrutiny after U.S. and Israeli strikes earlier this year. France, Germany and the U.K. are moving to reimpose sanctions, accusing Tehran of breaching the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which U.S. President [Donald Trump](#) unilaterally abandoned in 2018.

On Wednesday, just a day before the missile tests, Tehran rejected any talks with the U.S. on missile restrictions, framing such demands as an obstacle to diplomacy. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei: "The United States is in no position to make decisions about Iran's national defence capabilities." U.S. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#): "A nuclear Iran governed by a radical [Shia] cleric that possesses not just nuclear

weapons potentially but the missiles that could deliver those weapons far away is an unacceptable risk, not just for Israel, not just for the United States, but for the world.”

Thursday’s suspected missile tests reinforce Tehran’s posture of defiance following coordinated U.S. and Israeli strikes on its nuclear and missile infrastructure. The U.N. Security Council is set to vote Friday on a draft resolution to snapback sanctions, part of the European-led effort over Tehran’s alleged JCPOA violations. With negotiations stalled and Iran continuing to develop its arsenal, regional tensions are expected to remain high.

9. U.S. troops could be returning to Afghanistan

[Washington Times](#)

Eyes taking back control of Bagram Air Base

By: Jeff Mordock for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 19SE2025

President Trump on Thursday said the U.S. is working to return troops to Afghanistan by reestablishing a presence at Bagram Air Base, four years after the Biden administration’s bungled withdrawal left the base in Taliban hands.

Mr. Trump said returning troops to Afghanistan is critical to combat Chinese aggression while adding that his plan to withdraw from Afghanistan would have included keeping the base. “We were going to leave Afghanistan, but we were going to leave it with strength and dignity, and we were going to keep Bagram, the big air base — one of the biggest air bases in the world,” Mr. Trump said during a joint news conference with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. “We’re trying to get it back, by the way. “One of the reasons we want the base is, as you know, it’s an hour away from where China makes its nuclear weapons,” Mr. Trump continued.

The president also said America has leverage over the Taliban that could force the Islamist militia to transfer the base back to the U.S. The Taliban has struggled with an economic crisis, a lack of international legitimacy and fighting with rival militant groups. The U.S. and the Taliban have no formal diplomatic ties, but they have had discussions over a hostage — an American man who was abducted in 2023 while touring the country — who was released by the Taliban in March. “We’re trying to get it back because they need things from us,” Mr. Trump said. “We want it back.”

It is not immediately clear whether the White House or Pentagon has done any planning around returning the massive air base to the U.S. A White House spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment. During his first

administration, Mr. Trump established terms for the U.S. to leave Afghanistan by negotiating a deal with the Taliban. However, he left office before it could be fully executed. The Biden administration prepared its own plan to end the 20-year conflict, but it quickly crumbled. Mr. Biden's approval rating never recovered from the Afghanistan debacle.

Upon America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, its U.S.-backed government collapsed, returning the country to the hands of the Taliban. With Bagram gone and the last U.S. aircraft departing the country at Kabul's civilian airport, a suicide bombing at the airport's entrance, overwhelmed by thousands of desperate locals, killed 13 U.S. troops and 170 Afghans. Mr. Trump and his Republican allies seized on the moment, saying it symbolized Mr. Biden's weak presidency. Those criticisms have persisted into the present day, including last week when Mr. Trump blasted his predecessor for the withdrawal.

"He would have never done what he did, except that he didn't respect the leadership of the United States," Mr. Trump said last week, speaking of Russian President Vladimir Putin. "They just went through the Afghanistan total disaster for no reason whatsoever. We were going to leave Afghanistan, but we were going to leave it with strength and dignity. We were going to keep Bagram Air Base — one of the biggest air bases in the world. We gave it to them for nothing."

10. Mainland Chinese military magazine details plans to counter Taiwan's most advanced weapons

[Mainland Chinese military magazine details plans to counter Taiwan's most advanced weapons | South China Morning Post](#)
By: Alcott Wei, for the South China Morning Post, // September 17, 2025

A popular mainland Chinese military magazine has detailed plans to counter Taiwan's most advanced weapons in a conflict - including its newly acquired US-made Himars multiple rocket launcher - a weapon it says does not change the battlefield.

Ordnance Science and Technology published an analysis article in August that focused on the performance of three weapons showcased by Taiwan during the annual Han Kuang military exercises - and potential countermeasures that could be used by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The magazine - favoured among military enthusiasts - is supervised by the Shaanxi Association for Science and Technology and mainly reports on popular science and China's latest military developments and national defence, as well as providing analyses on the military dynamics of other countries or regions.

Taiwan's Han Kuang exercise in July differed significantly from previous years in both scale and duration. The duration was doubled to 10 days and, for the first time, extended from coastal defence to full-scale urban warfare, simulating house-to-house combat against advancing PLA forces. The drills also featured several new pieces of equipment bought from the United States, including the Lockheed Martin Himars (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) and US M1A2T Abrams tanks. The article directly referred to Taiwan's military as "Taiwan independence armed forces" and said that the increased exercise duration and in-depth defence projects reflected a shift in Taiwan's strategic thinking towards "prolonged resistance while waiting for external aid".

The article claimed that Taiwan's reliance on new weapons would not change the battlefield dynamics. It devoted substantial space to introducing the Himars displayed during the exercises, noting that the system had strong mobility, was capable of flexible strikes and could carry multiple warheads. "In the exercises, the Himars mainly carried out 'combat power preservation' through mobility - first avoiding detection by PLA reconnaissance forces, and then launching strikes," the article's author, Ma Ke, wrote.

The Himars is equipped with six launch tubes for multiple rockets, guided by GPS satellites, with a maximum range of 70km (44 miles). It can also carry a set of Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), with a range of up to 300km. It is widely believed that the system would play a crucial role in a conflict between mainland China and Taiwan. The Taiwan Strait, which separates the mainland from Taiwan, is 180km wide on average. Ukraine has used the Himars to strike key Russian targets. "Taiwan hails the Himars as an 'anti-landing weapon' because, in the early stages of the war in Ukraine, it inflicted significant losses on Russian forces, which at that time lacked the ability to jam GPS guidance and counter highly mobile strike systems," the article said.

Credible records of the system being destroyed by Russian forces on the Ukrainian battlefield are rare, but the article claimed that the PLA's reconnaissance and electronic warfare capabilities were stronger than those of Russia and would allow it to quickly locate and suppress the Himars. "In the event of a conflict, the PLA would rapidly seize air superiority around the Taiwan Strait and use a diverse reconnaissance network and integrated reconnaissance-strike drones to ensure the Himars is 'destroyed once detected'," the article said.

The article also touched on the Himars' reliance on road networks for rapid redeployment, noting that the PLA could strike transport hubs on Taiwan's west coast - such as bridges and tunnels - to limit their manoeuvrability, forcing them to remain in preset strike zones. In August, models of what appeared to be Himars launchers ordered

by Taiwan from the US were spotted in a car park in mainland China, suggesting that the PLA may be simulating strikes against the system in preparation for a potential conflict. Taiwan first ordered Himars in 2020, with delivery taking place last year, followed by testing in May this year. Taipei has ordered 18 more systems, which are expected to arrive early next year.

The article also mentioned a new locally developed air defence missile - the TC-2 - displayed during the exercises. In the drills, the missile was deployed to provide field air defence for command posts and to protect certain airports in the event of PLA aircraft advancing on Taiwan's east coast. According to the article, the missile has a range of about 15km, is equipped with electronic countermeasure capabilities, and comes with a phased-array radar that enables coordinated operations. "In the past, Taiwan's army field air defence units operated independently of each other. Under the new system, different types of surface-to-air missile vehicles can now coordinate in combat," the article said.

The TC-2 system is expected to be paired with the US-made Patriot system to form a high-low layered air defence combination, according to the article. Although the Patriot has stronger air defence capabilities, it is bound to become the PLA's main target, giving the TC-2s a greater chance to survive. The TC-2s may be able to hold out for some time "but its limited numbers mean that the defensive network it creates will not be dense enough to withstand a PLA saturation attack". Taiwan bought 246 land-based TC-2 surface-to-air missiles and 29 launch vehicles in 2019. The article also discussed the appearance of the Abrams tanks during the exercise, which it said were a "Taiwan-specific" variant based on the US Army's M1A2 SEPv3 model. Taiwan has bought 108 tanks, with another 28 expected to be delivered next year.

"The tank's overall combat capability is decent - it could even be called outstanding. But the problem lies in the combat environment. These tanks are suitable for desert assaults in the Middle East," the article said. "On Taiwan's island, which is filled with hills, mountains and rivers, a 63-ton tank has limited room to operate. If the PLA focuses on striking bridges and roads, these tanks would become trapped beasts." Given experience from the Russia-Ukraine battlefield, the article said, Taiwan's new tanks would be wasted if they could not solve the problem of enemy drones overhead, a technology that Beijing is now leading in.

This year's Han Kuang exercise focused on responding to Beijing's "grey-zone" tactics - continuous pressure without open conflict. Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China, to be reunified by force if necessary. Most countries - including Taiwan's main arms supplier and international backer, the United States - do not recognise the self-ruled island as an

independent state. However, Washington opposes any attempt to change the status quo by force and is legally committed to arming Taiwan for defence. Since last year, when William Lai Ching-te, leader of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, took office, the PLA has conducted several large-scale military drills around Taiwan aimed at deterring what Beijing has seen as provocative moves to push the island towards independence. In response to the military pressure, Taipei has accelerated arms imports from the US.

11. Americans can stand together in standing up to China

[Washington Times](#)

Defend against and counter Xi's plan for a new world order

BY: DANIEL N. HOFFMAN for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 19SE2025

While commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II with an ostentatious communist military parade in Beijing earlier this month, Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping was choreographing the dance of the world's most nefarious dictators.

For the first time, standing with Mr. Xi were Russian ruler Vladimir Putin, North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong-un and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian — the Four Horsemen of this century's axis of tyranny, which China is exploiting to boost its global influence in confrontation with the U.S. and its allies. Overseeing his troops goose-stepping toward Tiananmen Square, Mr. Xi spewed anti-U.S. propaganda about "taking a stand against hegemonism and power politics" when, in fact, he is responsible for spawning this century's Cold War.

Beijing is militarizing the South China Sea while infringing on the economic rights of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan; conducting massive hacking operations including into the Office of Personnel Management to steal U.S. government employee data; counterfeiting Western products and stealing trade secrets through espionage and by requiring foreign companies to reveal technology secrets with Chinese companies in return for market access; using its "One Belt, One Road" initiative as cover for debt trap diplomacy; and mounting sophisticated cyberespionage attacks on U.S. data and intellectual property, most recently with its advanced persistent threat actor Salt Typhoon.

Chinese theft of intellectual property costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars each year. China has long claimed Taiwan to be its "breakaway province" to be reunited by force, if necessary, despite having never ruled it. Illegally annexing Taiwan would extend China's reach into the East China Sea, threaten Japan and Guam, and enable

China to subsume Taiwan's high-tech industry, including its world-class semiconductor factories. Closely allied with Cuba and Venezuela, China is also actively encroaching on U.S. commercial and national security interests in the Western Hemisphere.

At the turn of the century, China joined the World Trade Organization and then proceeded to break all the rules governing international trade. While blocking imports, China flooded overseas markets, especially in the U.S. and Western Europe, with comparatively cheaper goods. Implementing its state-run communist economic model, China spends hundreds of billions of dollars on industrial subsidies that have threatened the European Union's clean energy strategy. This is especially true for solar panels, where China controls 80% of the world's manufacturing capacity, and global electric vehicle sales, for which China has built a 60% share.

That's why Europe suffers a \$500 billion trade deficit with China. Violating internationally recognized standards for labor and preventing its population from enjoying the standards of living that should be commensurate with its rising gross domestic product, China artificially drives down prices to gain overwhelming control over rare earth and critical mineral processing and other key markets. The Middle East trades more with China than the U.S. China established its first overseas base in Djibouti and negotiated strategic partnerships with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait.

Chinese companies in Oman, which has a free trade agreement with the U.S., flood the U.S. market with re-exports of high technology while evading U.S. tariffs and scrutiny. Nothing is more important for U.S. national security than a comprehensive strategy to defend, deter and counter Mr. Xi's aggressive plan to build a new world order, where the Chinese Communist Party exterminates the principles of liberty, freedom and democracy enshrined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. It all starts with the U.S. intelligence community, which is on the hook to steal Mr. Xi's secrets, especially his plans and intentions to wield China's military, economic and diplomatic power against us.

We have no reason to go it alone. China's coercive diplomacy, unfair trade practices and military aggression threaten a multitude of nations for which China's state-sponsored tyranny is anathema. Our allies and partners can be powerful force multipliers so that the U.S. conducts its China policy more effectively and, especially with respect to our financial and military resources, efficiently. Mr. Xi wants China's adversaries to be weak and divided because he knows that together we are stronger and better equipped to protect internationally recognized borders, freedom of

navigation, and the free exchange of goods and services on which the U.S. and global economies rely.

If there's a silver lining for what too often appears to be hopelessly divided American politics, it's that Democrats and Republicans should find common ground on promoting U.S. global leadership rather than suffer the consequences of Chinese hegemony. *Daniel N. Hoffman is a retired clandestine services officer and former chief of station with the Central Intelligence Agency. His combined 30 years of government service included high-level overseas and domestic positions at the CIA. He has been a Fox News contributor since May 2018. He can be reached at danielhoffman@yahoo.com.*